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## *Patronage Politics and Clientelism in Housing Welfare: The Case of Gawad Kalinga (GK) Villages in Parañaque City, The Philippines*

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### **ABSTRACT**

Patronage politics has become a defining characteristic of the Philippine political landscape. Clientelism, a form of patronage, is often studied as disadvantageous in governance and democratic consolidation. While the patron-client framework remains the most influential among schools of thought that explain Philippine politics, transformations in a clientelist exchange are evident given changes in political, cultural and economic settings. Using this frame of new clientelism, we look at and revisit the structure of patronage in the provision of housing welfare in the Philippines, focusing now on the roles of three important actors—the nongovernmental organization, the state through the local government and the recipients or beneficiaries—in an urban setting, thus deviating from the traditional conception of patronage and clientelist politics. This relationship of clientelist exchange is presented in our Accomplice-Principal-Accessory (APA) model of clientelism, with the local government unit of Parañaque City as accomplice, the Gawad Kalinga (GK) as the principal agent, and the recipients or beneficiaries as accessories in the provision of housing welfare.

Keywords: housing welfare, local government, new clientelism, nongovernmental organization, patron-client relations patronage politics

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the weakest institutions of the Philippines is its political system as it is dominated by leading political families.

Politics typically revolves around personalities rather than programs or proposals, and serve usually as means of patronage (Quimpo, 2005). Patronage politics has always been viewed as a negative practice and it has become a defining characteristic of the Philippine political landscape.

Patronage includes clientelism, wherein politicians prioritize their supporters in terms of governmental assistances. The political elite solicits the support of the relatively powerful who draw authority and strength from the powerless voters for assistance. In return, these voters are rewarded with the fruits of the influence and whatever else that was agreed upon (Kawanaka, 2012). It is then a form of inequality and it can be a network to political dynasty, which is another prohibited practice. It has always been seen as a rapport to corruption, red tape, and other illegal practices such as nepotism or fixing (Chen & Williams 2007). Patronage politics or personality politics also involves the act of selecting or appointing persons to certain positions disregarding qualifications of applicants or appointees as it largely is preferential on the official. That is, relationships, personal or familial, become the bases of decision-making. Wilkin (2011) succinctly captured this when he claimed that it is an indicator of bad governance. Patronage thus hinders the efficient management of political and economical resources of the state (UNDP: Human Development Report, 2005). Hence, clientage is often studied as disadvantageous in governance and demo-

cratic consolidation. As such, as scholars of Philippine politics aver, there is an urgency to strengthen the country's political system to eliminate patronage (Magno, 1992; Rocamora, 2002; Teehankee, 2009; Quimpo, 2011; Rivera, 2011).

While it is true that scholarship on patron-client ties dates back more than several decades, the patron-client framework remains the most influential among schools of thought that explain Philippine politics (Kerkvliet, 1995). However, transformations in a clientelist exchange are evident given changes in political, cultural and economic settings (Hopkin, 2001; Park, 2008; Reid, 2008; Tomsa and Ufen, 2012) and it is under this purview that we look at and revisit the structure of patronage in the provision of housing welfare in the Philippines, focusing now on the roles of three important actors— the nongovernmental organization, the state through the local government and the recipients or beneficiaries— in an urban setting, thus deviating from the traditional conception of patronage and clientelist politics. Aside from this, we intend to contribute to the existing debate on urban politics fulfilling what Johnston (1979) posed as a challenge to urbanizing nations: how well patron-client organizations govern their cities is critical, as it will outline the urban future of much of humanity.

The article is organized as follows. The first section reviews briefly the extant literature and theoretical considerations on patronage and clientelism. The methods used in the study then follows. The presentation of how the clientelist exchange transpires in the housing welfare is next. The final part concludes through a presentation of our accomplice-principal-accessory (APA) model of clientage.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Kaufman (1974), synthesizing the works of Lande (1971), Scott (1972) and Powell (1974) pointed out that patron-client relations are a special type of dyadic exchange between actors of unequal power and status and is based on the principle of reciprocity. He further characterized the relationship as particularistic and private and are anchored only loosely in public law or community norms (Kaufman, 1974). The presence of this clientelist exchange between actors (patrons, brokers and clients) organized into pyramidal networks is in general agreement with more recent work on the extant literature on patronage. Auyero, Lapegna and Poma (2009), for example, looked at clientelism as the distribution or promise of resources by political officeholders or political candidates in exchange for political support. Specifically, and consistent with this, Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) emphasized that political clientelism is a form of transaction that involves the direct exchange of a citizen's vote in return for direct payments or continuing access to employment, goods and services. This relationship, Park (2008) argued, develops neither by force nor by contract. Thus, voluntary engagement characterizes these exchanges of benefits. Clearly, as Trantidis (2013) put, clientelism emerges from two interrelated political processes, which are competition for office and competition for access to resources distributed by political power.

The above definitions of clientelism fall under what is referred to as "old clientelism" or "clientelism of the notables" which is characteristic of traditional rural societies. In contrast, "new" forms of clientelism involve that where an organized political party that uses state resources to win the client's vote takes up the role of the notable.

Furthermore, this clientelism is a less unequal and personalized and more openly materialistic than that of the old (Hopkin, 2001). This change in clientele networks may well be reflective of what Park (2008) believed is a function of the changes of social configuration reflecting political and socio-economic development. Kitschelt (2000) argued in his study of linkages between citizens and politicians that clientelist and programmatic linkage mechanisms must be considered as equivalents as they have the capacity to organize and institutionalize relations of democratic accountability and responsiveness. He further pointed out that clientelist democracy has proved durable and has entrenched itself for long periods in a variety of polities. Similarly, Tomsa and Ufen (2012) contended that in Southeast Asia, in the Philippines particularly, clientelism is resilient and highly adaptable to a range of political, economic and cultural settings and instead of disappearing, it has transformed into a more complex pattern of exchange. Apart from this, it is critical to emphasize that Reid's (2008) statement, that the civil society, specifically nongovernmental organizations, is by itself a sphere where clientelism and semiclientelism predominate given that well-intentioned NGO personnel who previously had a critical stance towards clientelism would later on ultimately become absorbed by these relationships, is also an important evidence of the transformation in clientelist politics. As he argued, as more overt forms of co-optation and authoritarianism are reduced, more subtle methods of neoclientelism emerge.

Given these changes, how then do we characterize clientelism that exists among non-governmental organizations, the state through the local govern-

ment, and the voting public? What type of relations are produced and eventually recur in these arrangements? How, if at all, does a non-governmental organization encourage patronage? How does the state through the local government participate in this kind of exchange? These questions are left unresolved in the study of clientelism and these guide us in understanding "new" clientelism in housing welfare in a highly urbanized Philippine city.

### **CLIENTELIST POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE**

Clientelism is seen as a bond of reliance and control based on power differences and inequality. The connection involves two services- instrumental (e.g. economical and political) and sociational or expressive (e.g. loyalty and solidarity). The former is provided by the top (patron) through a broker while the latter is directly given by the bottom (client/s) (Auyero, Lapegna & Page Roma, 2009). Caprara, et al (2006) provided this in their study arguing that voters tend to decide based on personal preferences. According to them, modern politics had become more personalized, and political choice was affected by two aspects of personality- traits and personal values. The reason behind these changes was the declining distinctiveness, diversity and extremity in the parties. Most of the platforms or goals presented by the parties were similar, so voters end up voting candidates or parties with favorable attitude towards them as voters. This was somehow a form of subjectivity or bias because instead of voting for the skilled one, you opt for the closest one to you. It was a mild form of nepotism or favoritism. The study concluded the supremacy of values over traits. For people, particularly voters, it was more important for leaders to

have broad goals to which people attribute as general guiding principles. People put much importance on integrity. Adding to that, people wanted a leader that they can trust, so this led to the practice of political patronage or patronage politics. People chose according to friendship, family ties or favoritism.

The link between governance, clientelism and democracy has been prominent in the extant literature. For instance, Chen and Williams (2007) examined the connection between political support and red tape. According to them, red tape connoted wasteful and inefficient processes, excessive bureaucracy, and inflexible organizational structures and professional practices. The study showed that political support in terms of trust, confidence and provision of administrative autonomy provided conditions conducive to development and maintenance of developmental culture that promotes learning, adaptation and innovation (Bozeman and Kingsley, 1998). Hence, political support diminished red tape. However, political support should not be too excessive to the point that it would become political patronage because that could lead to another conflict- corruption in form of nepotism and favoritism. Similarly, in the study of Bangladesh's transition to democracy, Kochanek (2000) argued that a combination of weak structures, patrimonial politics, personalized political parties, patron-client relationships and the absence of political consensus have resulted in a partial democracy characterized by pervasive corruption, absence of transparency and lack of public accountability. In South India, Markussen (2010) posited that while political parties can be vehicles for economic and social development, they can also serve as rent seeking instruments. He

continued that the allocation of public resources according to criteria of political affiliation does not correspond well with traditional standards of democracy and good governance. As in Asia, this link is also evident in Eastern Europe and Africa. In Russia, for example, patronage may have been re-orientated but they have not disappeared. As Hosking (2000) identified, during the privatization process, personal connections were more important than ever. Present-day Russian state and political economy are marked by elements of patronage and clientelism. Moreover, in Uganda, reforms from the IMF and World Bank were meant to curtail patronage opportunities but the wide discretion given to the governing elites in the implementation has led to the contrary: donor reforms initiated under structural adjustment have not resulted to a smaller state or in fewer public resources as initially set (Mwenda and Tangri, 2005). Similarly, in Nigeria, the clientelistic chain serves as the channel through which development projects are implemented and thus rural underdevelopment persists in spite of a continual flow of development work, services and goods (Omobowale and Olutayo, 2010). In Latin America, it is argued that inequality is built into the patron-client relationship and it is key to understanding social and political relationships as in clientship and citizenship and thus the crisis of democracy (Taylor, 2004). This is arguably the case as well of Argentina where symptoms of a heavily clientelistic political culture is present given that low-income Argentines are in danger of being turned into political clients (Brusco, Nazareno and Stokes, 2004) instead of active citizens.

## *PATRONAGE AND PHILIPPINE POLITICS*

The Philippines is also a paradigmatic case of clientelist politics. Scholars who emphasize on the clientelist nature of Philippine politics, specifically of elections and parties, aver that the culture of patronage has sustained the strong hold of patrons over clients over time; and this precluded parties from differentiating themselves around political platforms. Teehankee (2009), for example, noted that as personality-based organizations largely organized around dominant local political clans and warlords, these parties are anchored on clientelistic relations leaving them devoid of platform and ideology. Magno (1992) also claimed that the political parties that developed in the Philippines were mere institutional exemplifications of the patron's vast networks of clients and their alliances at all levels of governance. This could perhaps be what Rivera (2011) pictured as the scenario where "[congressional representatives and provincial governorships] positions serve as the nexus between national and local power by facilitating patronage flows and rent-seeking activities". On a similar note, Rocamora (2002) pointed out that these elites' interests were institutionalized in political parties and enabled the clan- and faction-based party system to remain impermeable of class based politics.

Scholars have described how these ties work in the Philippines and other paradigmatic cases. Consistent with the definition of Kaufmann (1974), Sidel (1997) noted that patron-client ties are highly personalized, multifunctional, and affect-laden. He further opined that social relations and electoral politics in the Philippines are characterized by the centrality of patron-client relations. However, he pointed out the presence of force,

specifically violence, which is the reverse of reciprocal relations assumed by the patron-client framework, thus offering bossism and warlordism as state-centered explanations of Philippine politics.

On a similar note, Quimpo (2005) emphasized that the patron-client framework is a prominent interpretation of Philippine politics. However, offering an alternative interpretation of Philippine politics through his contested democracy that combines the frameworks of elite democracy and democracy from below, he argued that the Philippine political landscape is characterized by a contestation between a patrimonial elite who has a minimalist view of democracy and subordinate classes and communities that cry for a more participatory and egalitarian democracy.

Lande (2002) observed that while Philippine politics has changed since the early post-war years, in the rural areas, personalism and clientelism remain an important element of the country's electoral politics. Moreover, Kasuya (2005) also posited that it is a widely accepted notion in the scholarship in Philippine politics that the political landscape of the country is centered more on the exchange of patronage and favors among politicians, and between politicians and voters than on partisan ties and/or the policy interests of voters.

The more recent body of literature on patronage stresses the possible functional aspects of a patron-client exchange in the Philippines and the changes that go with it. Tadem (1998) for instance contended that patronage politics has been one of the reasons for the failure of government-initiated cooperatives in the country. Moreover, Gonzalez (2007) reiterated the influence of patronage in the Philippine political economy when he argued that clientelism is at the origin of path-dependence in



budget restructuring in the country. Supporting these functions of clientelism, the World Bank suggested to limit the scope of patronage in public employment to reform the Philippine bureaucracy, giving way to a merit-based recruitment system in the civil service. Eaton (2003) also maintained this when he claimed that over the course of the decades, in the Philippines, elite-dominated parties mastered the politics of clientelism and as such, non-governmental organizations are constrained to influence the substance of the policy process. In electoral politics, Teehankee (2002) opined that clientelism and nepotism have reinforced the elitist nature of Philippine elections and democracy. Hedman (2010) succinctly captured this when she claimed that the possibilities and the promise of further democratization in the Philippines have continued to struggle against the familiar politics of clientelism, among many other obstacles. By and large, in the Philippines as in elsewhere, clientelism entails patterns of service provision and resource distribution that overprivilege some groups to the exclusion of others (Reid, 2008).

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research is a qualitative-descriptive one aimed to show the relationship between patronage politics in housing programs and the urban poor in Parañaque City. Using in-depth interviews at cross-sectional timeframes with 15 individuals consisting of Gawad Kalinga (GK) block leaders, GK officials and LGU officials who were selected through purposive sampling technique, first-hand information regarding the perspectives of these individuals on patronage politics in housing were gathered. Because of the nature of the research, the names of the respondents were mindedly withheld.

Questions such as, “Honestly, do you have any connection with the GK or probably, any politician?” to determine the existence of patronage and “Do you think patronage politics is wrong?” to verify the points of view of the recipients on clientage were asked to the respondents. Upon accumulating the data needed, after reading and rereading of the interview transcripts, commonalities and variations of the respondents’ answers were initially identified. Through coding and open coding, themes and categories were established, from which discussion of answers to the research questions on hand followed.

## **RESULT AND ANALYSIS**

The existence of the patronage politics in our society is well established, yet illusive because often it is seen as a detrimental factor in the political system. Based on the interviews and on the very essence of patron-client framework, all three entities commit patronage and serve as patrons and clients, depending on the circumstances. However, even though all the bodies involved act as patrons and clients at different situations, the three themes that emerged the most are: the local government of Parañaque is an accomplice, the Gawad Kalinga is a principal agent, and the recipients are accessories of patronage politics.

### **ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF PARAÑAQUE AS AN ACCOMPLICE OF PATRONAGE POLITICS**

An accomplice is the one that may assist or encourage the principal agent with the intent to have the act committed, the same as the chief actor. An accomplice may or may not be present when the act is actually committed. The local government of Parañaque is only an accomplice of

clientelism because it has the same intentions with the principal agent (GK) and full awareness of the plans or activities but has a minimal participation in the process. It is not a consistent actor because it only interferes when it wants. As one respondent from the LGU has said, the mayor only makes appearances during ribbon cuttings and the GK villages' events; hence, the people think GK is one of his platforms. The LGU will not engage in the association unless it is ascertained of benefits in exchange for its services. This actuation by the local government upholds the "new clientelism" Leonard has included in his 2010 study of patronage. "New clientelism" is a form of clientage that gives emphasis on reciprocity. Unlike the traditional clientelism wherein the patrons use their influence solely to manipulate the clients, this "new clientelism" suggests that patrons practice patronage to gain something else for themselves, not just political trust. This "new clientelism" also states that patronage has a farther local and global reach. It is more widespread. This is observed in the multi-sectoral quality of the link among LGU, GK and the recipients.

A respondent stated:

*"Gawad Kalinga is a private sector, so our usual involvement here in UMADO (now Urban Poor Assistance Office/ UPAO) with them is only the land or area through CMP or expropriation and the list of the recipients. We also issue the required permits like electrification permit."*

As seen in this response, there is an intertwining connection between the private sector and public sector, further uplifting the "new clientelism". Moreover, we can observe here that the LGU serves as patron to both GK and the

recipients. For the GK, the LGU behaves as its patron when it approves the programs, issues the necessary permits, provides the list of possible recipients and supplies the land areas to be utilized. It can acquire lands or lots for the projects in two ways, CMP and expropriation. The Community Mortgage Program (CMP) is a mortgage financing program of the National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation (NHMFC) which assists legally organized associations of underprivileged and homeless citizens to purchase and develop a tract of land under the concept of community ownership. The primary objective of the program is to assist residents of blighted areas to own the lots they occupy, or where they choose to relocate to and eventually improve their neighborhood and homes to the extent of their affordability. In this program, the local government of Parañaque purchases the land areas and later on, the recipients will pay for it monthly. Meanwhile, the expropriation is applicable when the government finds a private unused land that can be utilized to build villages but the owner does not want to sell the lot. The LGU will then issue an ordinance that will require the owner to sell it. Aside from that, the local government can also sponsor concrete materials if it wishes to as one LGU staff has mentioned. The LGU, through its staffs, also helps in the planning of the foundation of the villages.

A respondent said:

*"We do the planning. We organize the area and ensure the community involvement of each individual. We provide technical assistance. We do the math of land allotment."*

This scenario is actually a contradiction to the argument of Antonio Gramsci that the civil soci-

ety, being private and apart from the government, has the capacity to eliminate corruption in the political arena. He gives importance on the role of NGO's in controlling corruption and says that if NGO's can be strengthened and its efforts at monitoring the state encouraged, this would contribute to the eventual elimination of corruption. But as shown in this event, the NGO's actually depend on the government. The whole concept of being private is not applied in our system nowadays.

On the other hand, the LGU acts as the patron to the recipients when it prioritizes its supporters in the provision of services, particularly by including them in the recipients' list even when they do not qualify and giving some of these followers allowances. One of the participants has even stated that he has been shocked by the presence of unknown faces in their community.

One respondent said:

*"I get paid Php1,500 as my allowance. But that also changes depending on whether I was able to do my task appropriately."*

The respondent that has mentioned this is an outright supporter of the mayor, so he is provided with cash for his service. On the other hand, another block leader has said that he has not received any allowance though he is a legitimate block leader because he is not a supporter of the regime prior to the establishment of their village. We can visualize here the patron-client relationship vividly.

The LGU has also prioritized its supporters by handing them fully awarded housings, while the recipients who have less political connection are under the use of proc only. They are given 25 years

to settle in the village and when that term expires, they have to leave the village. This is an evidence of Leonard's (2010) argument that people who have less or no political connections are the ones who are less or not at all represented in the society; hence, they receive fewer benefits than those with political links.

One respondent said:

*"Yes, we do own this house. It is awarded to us."*

One respondent mentioned:

*"We will soon have the land and housing title after we finish paying the government."*

One participant stated:

*"We are not aware that we could pay the government monthly, so we can own our houses. The GK or the city hall did not tell us."*

These three responses are from three participants who are from different villages. The first 2 respondents are from Marcelo and Salas, villages with political affiliation to the mayor. The last respondent lives in Aya's, a GK village presumed to be private. As shown here, patronage really does play an important role in the provision governmental assistance and the LGU of Parañaque adheres to that. It is highly responsive to its clients and passive to the rest.

Since a patron-client relationship is a mutual one, the LGU- aside from providing- also gains in its association with Gawad Kalinga and the recipients. Upon approving the Gawad Kalinga agendas, the local government's duties are lessened. According to R.A. 7279, the LGU has to uplift the conditions of the underprivileged and homeless citizens in urban areas and in resettlement areas by making



available to them decent housing at affordable cost, basic services, and employment opportunities. Gawad Kalinga does it for the local government. This is manifested in the following statements.

An LGU official said:

*The local government gains in the relationship because it is able to fulfill its obligation in accordance with R.A. 7279.*"

Another LGU officer-in-charge (OIC) stated:

*"Of course, the projects of GK are in favor of the local government because the MMDA has issued a memo requiring us to relocate settlers in mission areas and through GK, that's easier to accomplish."*

Furthermore, the good image of Gawad Kalinga as a free housing benefactor that promotes brotherly and sisterly love among the Filipinos is gradually reflected on the LGU. The recipients then, unaware of the complete process, believe that it is through the LGU that they are able to acquire the housings; hence, they give their political trust to the current regime before, during and after elections. Some answers that sustain this claim are:

One recipient said:

*"They [LGU] pretend Gawad Kalinga is their project and people see them as good because of that."*

A respondent said:

*"We campaign for him and support him during elections."*

Another one said:

*"The ones living there are mayor's supporters. They even campaign for him during elections. They offer other people money in exchange for votes."*

A local government staff stated:

*"Bernabe used the Gawad Kalinga as a campaign material to earn the patronage of the constituents. He made it appear that Gawad Kalinga was initiative or was his platform."*

## ON "KALINGA POLITICS" AND THE GAWAD KALINGA AS A PRINCIPAL AGENT OF PATRON-AGE POLITICS

A *principal* is the chief actor or perpetrator of an act, the one who plans everything. The Gawad Kalinga is the principal agent in this relationship. It is the one who has pioneered the establishment of the links among multiple sectors, both private and public. With GK's template of land for the landless, homes for the homeless and food for the hungry, GK works hand in hand with local chief executives to provide for the basic needs of the constituents. Gawad Kalinga encourages the local government units to be fathers and mothers to the poor constituents and to bring services and development to those who need it most through "Kalinga Politics." Moreover, GK encourages the participation of private sectors through CSR. GK sees CSR as a stimulus for economic growth and nation-building.

As can be seen in the following replies and specifically the local government officer's response, the Gawad Kalinga actually serves as a patron, even without the LGU's intervention. In fact, according to some recipients and to some city hall employees, there is a private GK village without the approval of the LGU; hence, this shows that the GK is rightfully the principal agent of clientilism.

A block leader stated:

*"Gawad Kalinga convinces sponsors to support us and they take care of matters regarding that."*

Another respondent said:

*“We have nothing to say against Gawad Kalinga. They are the best to us! They help us a lot.”*

A recipient mentioned:

*“We feel secured here. We are not afraid anymore [of diseases or dying]. We have doctors from St. Luke’s.”*

A local government officer:

*“We have nothing to do with that case [unqualified recipients]. Those recipients have inside connections with Gawad Kalinga.”*

The GK operates as a patron to the recipients by sufficing them with their basic needs for survival and extending that help all throughout the existence of the community. It provides sponsors, health services, conducive living environment, and job opportunities to the people. Some of its sponsors are Shell, Philips, HSBC, Nestle and Unilever from Europe and other American companies such as Procter & Gamble, Colgate, Microsoft, IBM and Convergys. The GK is always there for the people and it even sets one GK official per village to ensure the distribution of the goods and services given by the sponsors. In addition to that, GK can also include individuals in the recipients’ list when they wish to. This is a clearer evidence of patronage because GK actually has no right to select the recipients. Additionally, the GK serves as a patron to the LGU by carrying out its task in accordance with the HLURB as what has been discussed above. Apart from that, one respondent has uttered that it helps the local government save revenues. Instead of spending the revenues to relocate the urban poor, the LGU can spend the money on other programs for the betterment of

the citizens and the city because the Gawad Kalinga already does that housing and resettlement obligation.

Instantaneously, Gawad Kalinga is a client of the naïve recipients and of the local government. The Gawad Kalinga needs the people to entice local and global sponsors to invest in their projects. As one participant has stated:

*“Without the people, GK is as good as dead. They need the urban poor to attract sponsors. If they have no one to help, no one will fund them. Let’s face it. Most of the GK heads are businessmen. They are profit-oriented.”*

Another respondent said:

*“I have heard of that issue. Gawad Kalinga has the direct link to the sponsors, so when it distributes the good and services, especially financial aids, to the community, it has already taken some portions.”*

This statement shows that the GK also gains extra profit through the people, so it is a client of the people. It achieves financial sustainability because of the recipients. It has enough funds to continue its projects because of the urban poor.

The Gawad Kalinga also requires the assistance of the local government through “Kalinga Politics” to operate. Without the approval of the local government, particularly of the mayor, on the “Kalinga Politics”, Gawad Kalinga should not actually be able to perform its functions. There are just some cases that slip through it. The local government also provides the specific relocation sites that the Gawad Kalinga can develop and the initial file of recipients that the Gawad Kalinga can work with. As one respondent from LGU mentioned:

*“Yes, Gawad Kalinga needs some permits from us before they can operate anywhere here in Parañaque.”*

## ON THE RECIPIENTS AS ACCESSORIES OF PATRONAGE POLITICS

An accessory is one contributing to or aiding in the commission of an action. It is a participant, as by command, advice, instigation, or concealment; either before or after the fact or commission. The recipients are the accessories of clientelism because they are the actors in the framework. But they do not share the same intent as the principal and accomplice. They are just left with no choice. While the LGU and GK are the thinkers, the recipients are the doers. They build the houses through bayanihan, campaign for the LGU and, innocently, inveigle the sponsors.

Of course, it is evident that the recipients are the clients in this patron-client set-up. But underneath that, they are being exploited by the two bodies (LGU and GK); hence, unconsciously, they are participating as the patrons in clientelism. The local government utilizes them to win electoral posts or to maintain the positions they are occupying at the moment. Because of patronage, the previous regime has managed to stay for three consecutive terms. One of the respondents has even said that he has nothing terrible to say about the prior regime and he is depressed by the loss of its descendant.

The Gawad Kalinga, on the other hand, uses them to take profits from sponsors. One respondent has claimed that GK has been taking its share on the goods and services doled out by the sponsors. Moreover, another respondent has supported this claim by saying that before the aids are distrib-

uted to the villagers, the assigned GK official and the block leaders have readily acquired some for themselves privately. This is supported by the reply of one LGU officer:

*“Of course, no one will sponsor GK without the people.”*

Since most of the recipients are naïve and most of them do not know about the Gawad Kalinga’s scheme, only few of them openly admitted that they are knowledgeable of it and that there is really an exploitation. A block leader has timidly confessed that during meetings with the GK officials for allocation of the sponsored services and good, they take their share. But he claims that they take only a minimal portion, just enough for them.

As clients, all the essentials of the recipients are provided by the Gawad Kalinga and the local government. They are sufficed economically, socially and culturally by both entities. They do not need to ask for anything. The two bodies (LGU and GK) use their authority, social status and other personal resource to give these recipients assistance. One respondent told me that their village has international sponsors from Canada and Singapore through the efforts of GK. This is further obvious in the other answers of the recipients.

One participant said:

*“We don’t need to ask anymore. They readily provide for us.”*

One recipient stated:

*“We have doctors and dentists coming over here. Sponsors bring us food. All that’s missing is a job for our kids’ allowances and schooling.”*

Another one said:

*"I sometimes have my allowance as the block leader. I am first in the receiving of the benefits from the sponsors. I get assistance for my wife's medical condition."*

Philippine politics revolves around interpersonal relationships- especially familial and patron-client ones- and factions composed of personal alliances (Kerkvliet, 1995). Nonetheless, patterns of clientage are different from what they were forty years ago. First, patronage relations today have a worldwide reach, through international trade, bilateral donor governments or international NGOs. Second, the means that power political clientage today are less monopolistic and less adequate to the task of purchasing peasant political loyalty. Thus the chains of patronage are less tight than they were historically. Third, the greater diversity of patrons operating today are much more likely to create spaces in which interests can eventually be aggregated into autonomous associations with independent political significance at the national level. NGOs play an important role in opening up this political space although at the moment, they most often act like a new type of patron (Leonard, 2010).

Parañaque City is not an exemption. As shown in this study, clientelism is endemic in its system and it involves both the public and private sector- the LGU of Parañaque, Gawad Kalinga, and the recipients. The reach of the networks is internationalized as well. There are participations from Europe, Canada, Indonesia, Singapore and America.

We have also observed that the principle of reciprocity rules in the framework; that is to say

that the benefits are "private" or "club" goods, not public. They are directed to individuals or small communities, not to the general interests of a class of people. For a concrete example, we have studied 3 Gawad Kalinga villages: Marcelo Green, Salas and Aya's. All three villages consist mostly of the urban poor population but the first 2 villages are fully awarded, while the last one, Aya's, is provided contractually to the settlers. The recipients have to leave after 25 years without any question. What's the reason for this difference? The first two GK communities are composed of several supporters of the LGU (mayor), while Aya's is not. This is the application of "new clientelism" (Leonard, 2010).

The idea of "new clientage" suggests that NGO's are used by the government to induce patronage or sometimes, the NGO's serve as the patron without intervention from external forces. This research shows that the NGO's exploit the government to gain benefits for themselves like how the Gawad Kalinga initiates partnerships with Local Chief Executives to establish villages that would attract local and foreign guarantors. NGO's are actually the principal agent of clientage, with the LGU as an intervening factor and the recipients as clients.

The concept of "new clientage" also states that the patronage chains are less tight now, because there are various sectors that can provide resources to the people. However, as shown in the study, the clients are still clingy to their patrons, and they give out their absolute trust to them. They are overly dependent to their benefactors; hence, they will not abandon the convenience and comfort of patronage.

The figure below illustrates a more concrete process of clientelism in the housing programs of the government of Parañaque and Gawad Kalinga.

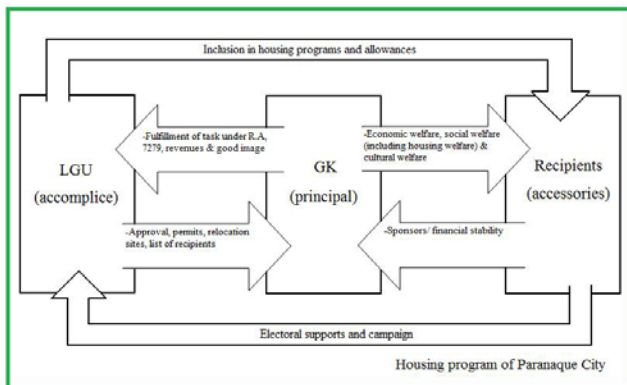


FIGURE 1. SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS OF PATRONAGE IN HOUSING PROGRAM OF PARAÑAQUE CITY, PHILIPPINES

As observed, all units are intertwined with the GK as the center and the pioneer of connections. The LGU, by being a patron to GK when accepting its project proposals and assisting in the foundation of the villages, also becomes a patron to the recipients through the illegitimate inclusion of them in the housing programs and the provision of allowances for services to some of them. But the LGU also exhibits the behavior of being a client of the GK and the recipients in the relationship. The GK serves as its patron by doing its task under the R.A. 7279 and reflecting on it the good image of the NGO, so people (including the recipients) will have political trust on it and it will achieve government stability and bureaucratic competence. The beneficiaries, on the other hand, behave as a patron to the LGU by giving it their full support and campaigning for the mayor before and during elections through word of mouth and money-play. In addition to that, the recipients obviously play the role of the clients in this political alliance. The LGU and the GK suffice them with their basic needs for survival and give them the opportunity to develop, so they can be independent in the future. Lastly, the GK, as the center of these links, also definitely

gains in the partnerships. It actually has established the framework for the benefits it can obtain from the partakers, so it participates as a client of the LGU and the recipients. It needs the LGU's approval to operate and it requires the presence of the recipients to entice municipal and international benefactors. When it has benefactors, the money keeps coming in and its continuity or existence and sustenance are guaranteed. This is the Accomplish-Principal-Accessory (APA) model of patronage politics, wherein the LGU acts as the accomplice, the GK as the principal agent and the recipients as the accessories. The principal is the chief actor and proponent, while the accomplice is a supporter of the idea of which it may be directly or indirectly involved and the accessory is the working hand of the principal and accomplice that does not necessarily share the same intent but nonetheless benefits from this relationship.

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